

## A Look Back at X-mas in Baghdad

(Right) Pfc. Eadi Humphries of F Troop, 9th Cavalry, 1st Cavalry Division lights a candle during a Christmas Eve candlelight service held at Forward Operating Base Union I in Baghdad.

(Below) Pfc. Bart Conley, 312th Military Intelligence Battalion, opens a present on Christmas Day, during a unit Christmas party at the 1st Cav. Div. Headquarters building on Camp Liberty in Baghdad Dec. 25.



By Sgt. John Queen, 3rd BCT Public Affairs



By Sgt. Christina Rockhill, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs



By Spc. Erin Robicheaux, 256th BCT Public Affairs

(Above) 1st Sgt. Jerry Harvey of Company C, 199th Forward Support Battalion, 256th Brigade Combat Team, gives thanks that his Soldiers are safe for the Holiday Season. The Louisiana Army National Guard unit is celebrating Christmas at Camp Liberty in Baghdad this year, serving in Operation Iraqi Freedom III.

# Christmas Gifts Bring Smiles to Soldiers

By Spc. Brian Schroeder  
10th Mtn. Div. Public Affairs

CAMP LIBERTY, Baghdad -- 'Twas two days before Christmas and all through Iraq, Soldiers prepared for the holidays with a rucksack on their back. Though they would not be home for the holiday season, the smiles on their faces had to be there for a reason. For one certain company in a certain battalion, gifts came in from nowhere like a ghostly Spanish galleon.

Every Soldier in the 2nd Battalion, 14th Infantry Regiment's Headquarters Company received Christmas gifts from the local community in Burlington, Vt. The individually labeled bags contained Vermont coffee, chocolate, eye drops and a candy cane.

1st Sgt. Kevin Deraps, Headquarters Co., 2-14 Infantry, said the gifts were a great way to raise the Soldiers' spirits during the holiday season.

"This is incredible," he said. "Each Soldier's face lights up after seeing their gift bag that has a tag with their name on it. It was nice of them to take the time to personalize each one."

Deraps said the gift idea started out as a care package his wife Jennifer began putting together with people she works with at the Chittenden Bank in Burlington. Once the word got out about the care packages, other organizations in the community decided to add their own touch to the packages. The final result was 215 gift bags for the Soldiers in the company.

Deraps said the shipping cost of the nearly 600 pounds of boxes was covered by the Chittenden Bank president.

Included with the gift bags were stockings filled with candy and a \$15 gift certificate to the Army and Air Force



By Spc. Brian Schroeder, 10th Mtn. Div. Public Affairs

Sgt. Tawon McGee, a team leader with 2nd Battalion, 14th Infantry Regiment, leader smiles as he receives a gift bag from 1st Sgt. Kevin Deraps. The individually-labeled gifts were sent to every Soldier the 2-14 Infantry Regiment's Headquarters Company.

Exchange Services. The stockings were provided to each Soldier in the battalion by the unit's family readiness group.

Spc. Eleazar Agrait, a personnel administration specialist, said this Christmas he will miss his mother the most, because he and his three brothers are deployed to Iraq over the holidays. However, he said the gifts will make his holiday easier.

"I didn't think anybody would do something like this," Agrait said. "Being away from home and seeing someone care enough to send a package to Iraq really boosts morale."

Sgt. Tawon McGee, a team leader,

accepted the gifts with a big smile on his face. He said he was not going to open the package until Christmas morning.

"I'm in Iraq," Tawon said. "It doesn't matter what I get in the gifts. There could be air in this bag and I would be just as happy because somebody gave this to me out of the kindness of their heart."

With Christmas just around the corner, some Soldiers wonder if Santa will still come in his sleigh. If he does or does not, their faces will still glow because these Soldiers received Christmas gifts from people they will never know.

## Useful Iraqi Words/Phrases

**How old are they?**  
**AHmaarhum kam?**

**Monday**  
High: 59  
Low: 41



**Tuesday**  
High: 64  
Low: 37



**Wednesday**  
High: 64  
Low: 37



Weather information provided by 1CD Staff Weather Office (SWO)

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## News Notes

### "Bad Kids" Watch as X-mas Toys Sold

HOUSTON (AP) -- The father of three children went from playing Santa Claus to playing the Grinch after he determined his children were being naughty instead of nice, and taught them a lesson on by auctioning their presents on eBay. "One thing we teach around this house," said the man, who asked not to reveal his name, "is that good things happen to good people and bad things happen to bad people." "Santa will skip our house this year," the man announced in his eBay posting to sell three DS systems with PictoChat and Metroid. Also offered were three games for use with the system. "No kidding. Three undeserving boys have crossed the line. Tonight we sat down and showed them what they will not get for Christmas this year. I'll be taking the tree down tomorrow."

### Teacher's Pet Goes A Little too Far

CHARLESTON, S.C. (AP) -- Middle school teacher ReBecca Kutcher remembers the sixth-grader who gave her a necklace for Christmas with what she thought was a cubic zirconia. At a conference with the parents the next month, Kutcher noticed the student's mother kept staring at the necklace. When the Laing Middle School teacher thanked the parents for the gift, she found out the mother had been looking for her one-carat diamond necklace for a month.

## South Texas Gets Rare White Christmas

VICTORIA, Texas (AP) -- Folks in Victoria, Texas, just off the Gulf Coast, weren't dreaming Saturday when they woke up to a white Christmas. They had one - the first in 86 years.

Almost a foot of snow fell overnight to give



AP

Rob Peck, right, of Dallas, pulls his son Trevor, 9, down a partly iced over slope using his father's childhood sled Dec. 23 in Dallas.

Victoria a taste of what the country's midsection has been dealing with the past two days: winter weather.

An arctic front that swept through the Midwest hit Indiana and Kentucky particularly hard, bringing record snowfalls that snarled holiday travel and stopped last-minute Christmas shoppers in their tracks. More than a dozen traffic deaths and thousands of auto accidents have been blamed on the storm so far.

The last time Victoria saw a measurable amount of snow was 1973, when a tenth of an inch fell. That's the same amount that fell on Christmas 1918, said Tony Merriman, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service.

"It's a miracle," proclaimed Hailey Koronczok, who was watching the snow fall as she worked at a Denny's. "Everybody's excited and shocked that it is snowing down here."

A few of Koronczok's co-workers - outnumbering their customers 2 to 1 because of the bad weather - ventured outside, wading into what turned out to be knee-high snow in some areas.

"Everybody's freaking out," said Megan Gohlke, 22, who gave her own traffic report: no closings or tie-ups, only a stranded car here and there.

And they weren't going to be stranded long: The forecast called for a fast melt, with highs in the 50s.

With the exception of South Texas and some air passengers in Philadelphia, things were starting to look up late Friday.

## Homeless Pets Find Homes for the Holidays

BALLARD, Wash. (Seattle Times) -- John Wagner made extra room in his Ballard home over the holidays for some elderly strangers who've seen hard times.

The strangers - first it was Shades, then Ruben, then Buzz, and now Fawn - are dogs no one wants anymore.

They're part of a new program this holiday season at animal-rescue group Pasado's Safe Haven in Monroe. The shelter is placing these dogs and cats with animal lovers, such as Wagner, for a little spoiling over the holidays - tummy rubs, cushy beds, a spot of their own by the fireplace, walks in the woods.

These are not the big-eyed puppies and cuddly little kittens that get swooped up fast from animal shelters. They are the old ones, many with health problems - deafness, blindness, incontinence.

Typically, Pasado's rescues them from overcrowded animal shelters, some on the same day they're scheduled to be euthanized.

But to Pasado's holiday volunteers, the animals are precious. "We've found that love blossoms between the humans and the animals during this test period," said Pasado's founder, Susan Michaels.



Seattle Times

John Wagner has adopted Fawn, left, and Ruben for the holiday season from Pasado's Safe Haven, where he is a volunteer.

Wagner, a cheerful retired Boeing computer analyst, already owned two dogs before he started volunteering at Pasado's in the fall. But in recent weeks, he's opened his home to a rotating cast of foster pets.

"Somehow, the more I learn about humans, the more I like dogs," said the 61-year-old childless bachelor as he sat on the porch of his home petting Ruben, a black-lab mix he guesses is about 10 years old.

## Broncos Still in the Game with Win

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) -- Jake Plummer broke out of his slump with a nearly perfect start and kept the Denver Broncos in the play-off race.

Plummer threw for 303 yards and two touchdowns, and Reuben Droughns scored



AP

Denver Broncos running back Reuben Droughns (34) tries to run past Tennessee Titans defensive tackle Kevin Carter in the Broncos' 37-16 win Saturday.

three TDs as the Broncos beat the Tennessee Titans 37-16 Saturday night to stay in at least a tie for the AFC's final wild-card slot going into the final week of the season.

Denver (9-6) had lost three of its last four games with two of those losses to teams with losing records, including last week's 45-17 rout at Kansas City. Plummer hurt Denver more than he helped with nine interceptions and only two touchdowns during that stretch.

The past month hadn't been easy for Plummer, who struggled both on the field and off, even paying a fine last week for an obscene gesture. He couldn't have started this game much better.

He completed his first eight passes, had a perfect passer rating of 158.3 in the first quarter and was 10-of-11 for 144 yards early in the second. He helped Denver score on its first three possessions for a 17-3 lead. He had a 23-yard TD pass to Droughns on the first drive for a lead the Broncos never relinquished.

"It is always good for a quarterback to have confidence, especially after all of the criticism," Denver receiver Ashley Lelie said. "For him to step up and play like he did just shows what type of character he has. We all thank Jake for playing as well as he did."

## Pistons Beat Pacers in Peaceful Rematch

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) -- Rasheed Wallace sauntered off the court and into the exit tunnel, pausing long enough to peel off his headband and hand it to a youngster wearing the rival's colors.

"Just a kid that asked for a headband, wasn't nothing more than that," Wallace said.

It was, however, a lot more than an empty gesture.

On an afternoon when many expected the worst in the first meeting between Indiana and Detroit since their Nov. 19 brawl, peace prevailed - as did the Pistons.

Nobody charged into the stands, nobody tossed any beer, nobody threw punches or chairs. Instead, the most significant thing anyone hoisted was a 3-pointer by Wallace with 90 seconds left that ended the Pacers' final hopes in Detroit's 98-93 victory Saturday.

"It was just a regular game, everybody playing the way they play," Pistons center Ben Wallace said. "It wasn't like we were out there intimidated, not wanting to touch

anybody because it might start a fight. We were out there to play basketball, and that's the way it should be."

The game went off with barely a harsh word exchanged by the teams, whose previous meeting degenerated into one of the worst melees in the history of U.S. professional sports.

Ben Wallace was booed every time he touched the ball, and fans behind the Detroit bench let loose with a few words of angry-but-clean heckling that the players ignored.

A tarp covered most of the exit tunnel, but it was unnecessary. The sellout crowd behaved, and the small contingent of fans who yelled at the Pistons as they walked off the court - none of whom appeared older than 12 - wanted nothing more than a hand slap or a headband.

"I think it was overhyped," said Reggie Miller, who led Indiana with 24 points. "We knew it was going to be a grind-it-out game for 48



AP

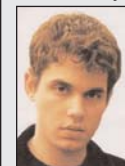
Detroit Pistons center Ben Wallace (3) puts up a shot over Indiana Pacers forward Jermaine O'Neal in Indianapolis Saturday.

minutes. They did all the little things, and that made the difference.

### In Brief

#### Mayer Barred from Ceremony

FAIRFIELD, Conn. (AP) -- Grammy Award-winner John Mayer returned to his



alma mater to be inducted into its Hall of Fame - and wound up in the headmas-

ter's office. The 27-year-old guitarist and singer, a 1995 graduate of Fairfield Warde High School, decided to attend the induction ceremony. School officials said they had not expected the pop star to attend. Mayer said he was taken to the headmaster's office, where officials stalled him until the ceremony was under way and then walked him to his car. "It was hurtful," he said Thursday.

#### Ex-Employee to Sue Brando Estate

LOS ANGELES (Reuters) - Marlon Brando's former business manager has filed a \$3.5-million claim against the late actor's estate, accusing the "Godfather" star of sexual harassment and breach of contract. The claim, filed on Thursday in Los Angeles County Superior Court and made public on Friday, says Brando "caused a hostile work environment due to his continuous acts of sexual harassment" toward Jo An Corrales during three years of employment. Corrales, a resident of Kalama, Washington, also claims Brando reneged on their contract by removing her as co-executor of his will just days before his death.